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White Sands Detachment launches Terrier Orion test rockets for Infrasound Program

NSWC PHD White Sands Detachment launched two Terrier Orion rockets on July 21 as part of the Infrasound Rocket Experiment. At an altitude of 30 kilometers above the earth a 50-pound explosive warhead detonated. The sound wave produced by this event was used to test 21 low-frequency monitoring stations scattered from Texas to Calif. and as far north as Winnipeg, Canada.

"To the monitoring stations, a 50-pound explosion at a height of 30 kilometers has the same fidelity or signal-to-noise ratio as a one-kiloton explosion on the surface of the earth," said Bill Andre, project manager of the Infrasound Rocket Experiment and chief of the Space Missile Defense DARPA Office.

The monitoring stations are in place to catch any noises of very low frequency that might be caused by large explosions around the globe. In other words, the monitoring stations can detect a explosion that would otherwise go undetected by humans.

The experiment conducted at White Sands helped to calibrate the listening stations.

"White Sands was picked for this test because it was the only place where we can have arrays fully deployed in all directions," said Andre. "White Sands has very good instrumentation with five radars tracking the events."

The U.S. is part of an international coalition monitoring low-frequency sounds 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The successful test was the culmination of efforts that began in December 2004.